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ABSTRACT

This summary examines public opinion research about teacher quality and strategies for improving U.S. teaching quality. Researchers examined surveys of teachers, school board members, principals, students, and the public. This review investigates: what constitutes quality teaching; how to define good teachers; the importance of teacher quality; whether Americans believe they have high quality teachers; how to achieve high quality; and what programs and strategies would help in this endeavor. Data show that the public: has a high opinion of teachers; believes better teachers are essential for improving schools; feels that schools must be safe for learning to occur; and believes that teacher subject knowledge is as important as the ability to teach that subject. Only one-quarter of the public is very satisfied with local schools for hiring and keeping good teachers. Four large policy issues surround obtaining quality teachers: improving teacher education, providing more inservice training, requiring teachers to pass certification/recertification tests, and holding teachers accountable for student performance. The public strongly believes in the need for good faculty development and the requirement for prospective teachers to pass proficiency tests. The paper concludes with key questions on defining quality teachers, content knowledge, recruitment incentives, and professional development. (Contains 42 references.) (SM)

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Teacher Quality:
A Review of Existing Survey Data

Prepared for
The Education Commission of the States

by

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Washington, DC
August 1999

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Table of Contents

			Page
I.	**Introduction**		1
II.	**Executive Summary**		3
III.	**Findings**		
	A.	What is "teacher quality"?	8
	B.	How important is teacher quality relative to other aspects of education?	13
	C.	Do we have high-quality teachers? How good a job are we doing?	16
	D.	How can high-quality teaching be achieved?	28
		- The processes of teacher education and professional development	28
		- Certification and tests of proficiency	29
		- Accountability and student achievement	32
IV.	**Conclusion**		49
Bibliography			50

I. Introduction

As policymakers strive to bring about high-quality teaching in public schools across the nation, many strategies are being put forth, tested, adopted and sometimes rejected. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) asked us to seek out existing public opinion research about the quality of teachers and the strategies for improving the quality of teaching in American schools. We examined dozens of surveys, including those among teachers themselves, school board members, principals and students — as well as the general public.

The following summary looks at public opinion among the general public, teachers, other educators and students in these areas:

- What constitutes quality teaching? How do we define "a good teacher"?
- What is the importance of the quality of teachers, relative to other aspects of education?
- Do Americans believe we have high teacher quality now?
- How can we achieve that high quality? What are the programs and strategies that the public and key players believe will be helpful?

We have also identified questions that remain unanswered by the existing polling data about how the public views or would view important aspects of improving and maintaining high teacher quality.

The investigation

We carried out an exhaustive search for existing research in the areas listed above. Our sources included our own research on education issues for a variety of clients, as well as studies carried out by other survey organizations for private clients and for publication. After reviewing the dozens of survey reports that we already had in hand, we contacted other research organizations and asked them for results pertaining to the issues under investigation. We visited the Web sites or telephoned scores of policy organizations asking for any polling data they had commissioned. We also conducted a search of the archives at

the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, where most published polls in the United States are housed. Many of these contacts resulted in data we have reported here.

There are other polls on some of the subjects under investigation that we did not use. We passed over a few because we did not find the questions well framed. Others are in private hands, and the sponsors have chosen not to make the results public. From what we know of this other research, we do not believe any of it would change conclusions we have drawn here.

For the most part, we restricted our search to polls conducted since 1995, and we opted to use the most recent surveys when time series were available. In addition to the data themselves, our thinking and analysis have been shaped by extensive focus group research we have conducted for a variety of clients on topics relevant to teacher quality, evaluation and professional development.

Most of the questions reviewed for this study are from nationally representative samples, although a few statewide polls are included as well. In addition to surveys of the general public, we identified and used selected questions from polls of parents, teachers, students, principals, school board members and policymakers — although many of these included only a few questions falling within our area of inquiry.

To help you read this report

The tables included in this report are expressed in percentages, unless otherwise stated. The percentages in the tables may not add up to 100% due to rounding and/or omission of responses such as "don't know" and "refused." In the case of multiple-response questions, percentages may add to more than 100%.

The organization that carried out the work along with the sample size, the population being studied and the date of the work have been listed at the bottom of each table in the report — except where such information was not available.

II. Executive Summary

What Americans think about teachers

Policymakers across the country are wrestling with how to improve the quality of their teaching force — making sure that new teachers are qualified, that existing teachers get appropriate training and that all teachers are held accountable for whether their students learn. They are considering, for example, tougher tests that prospective teachers must pass or tying part of teachers' compensation to their students' academic achievement.

For these policymakers, this is an arena filled with opportunity, because making sure students have good teachers is one of the public's top priorities.

But it is also an area that holds risk. The public puts more trust in teachers as a group than in policymakers, so policymakers will have to work unusually hard to communicate and sell policy changes that teachers are likely to resist.

A fresh examination of public opinion research data on teachers and teacher quality shows that this is an area of significant public concern. It also reveals that there are as many critical unanswered questions as questions with good answers. The data, for example, do not shed much light on what Americans mean by teacher quality — or what criteria they are using when they answer pollsters' questions about whether they are satisfied with teachers in the local schools.

We do know that teachers receive relatively good grades from the public, especially in relation to other characteristics of schools, such as safety, class size and physical maintenance. Although the public has a number of complaints about education, teachers are not the first problem that comes to mind.

But, the data suggest that if Americans do not think teachers are the primary problem, they do believe better teachers are the essential ingredient for improved schools. The public wants greater attention paid to helping teachers achieve and maintain high quality.

The importance of quality teachers

Over the past several years, we have learned that the public believes schools must first be safe if learning is to take place. School safety emerges as the public's top concern even in places where schools could be considered quite safe.

Looking beyond safety, the public puts getting and keeping better teachers at the top of the list for improving schools. More than eight in 10 Americans believe this would make a "big improvement" in public schools; compare that to only about half of Americans saying national education standards would provide a big improvement.

When Americans are asked to prioritize a long list of indicators they would use to hold schools accountable, teacher quality is at the top, trailing only school safety.

But existing polls do not tell us much about how the public would define quality teachers. We do not have good data, for example, on how the public views teacher credentials — degrees or board certification — or years of experience as indicators of quality.

What evidence there is suggests that the public believes a teacher's knowledge of the subject he or she teaches is about as important as his or her ability to teach that subject.

Public Agenda has asked perhaps the most direct question on this issue by asking students what they think. Students responded that the teachers who would get them to "learn a lot more" were teachers who make learning fun, who know the material and who give students individual attention.

How teachers are doing

On the surface, Americans generally give teachers good or excellent ratings for the job they are doing, and teachers and school board members give teachers even higher marks.

But scratch the surface and that support wavers. Only slightly more than one-quarter of the public is "very satisfied" with their local schools for hiring and keeping good teachers. Only three in 10 Americans say we are getting better and more capable teachers in the schools today than we did 20 years ago.

About four in 10 high school students say "too many bad teachers" is a problem in their schools. When Public Agenda asked parents, more than half said at least a few of their child's teachers have poor teaching skills, and nearly half said at least a few "don't belong in a classroom."

Among teachers themselves, slightly more than one in five say they have taught subjects for which they have no formal certification, and those numbers may have gone up as more teachers have been hired to reduce class sizes.

Getting better teachers

Four large policy issues surround obtaining high-quality, successful teachers — improving teacher education programs, providing more training for existing teachers, requiring teachers to pass tests to become certified or maintain their teaching certificate, and holding teachers accountable for their students' performance.

Education and training

Unfortunately, there is little public polling data on what the public or teachers believe teacher education programs contribute to teachers' qualifications.

There is, however, a considerable amount of public opinion data on the training of teachers. These data show that the public strongly supports more and better training — professional development — for teachers, and believes schools should spend more money on professional development. Only about one American out of 20 says schools spend too much to train teachers.

The public says the time available to teachers for professional development should be expanded, and teachers should be paid so they can stay up-to-date with developments in their fields. But the public is concerned that this additional time not come at the expense of instructional time for students.

Nearly all teachers say they had some form of professional development in the last year, with nearly nine in 10 saying they attended some sort of workshop or "inservice" program sponsored by their school district. About two-thirds of teachers say the professional development they received caused them to change their teaching practices.

Teachers do not see more or improved professional development as an incentive to keep them in the profession. Instead, the issues teachers identify as the best way to retain them are higher salaries and benefits, smaller class sizes and safer schools with more student discipline.

Demonstrating ability and being held accountable

The public clearly supports requiring prospective teachers to pass a proficiency test before entering the classroom, a policy that dramatically grabbed the public's attention last year when Massachusetts revealed how low teachers scored on an exam not viewed as particularly rigorous. A just-released survey found that 97% of Americans feel that prospective teachers should be required to prove their knowledge before they are hired to be teachers.

Two-thirds of the public would also support policies requiring existing teachers to pass a test periodically to stay in the classroom. This issue has more currency now as a greater number of states create high-stakes tests that students must pass to graduate. In focus

groups with parents, we commonly hear: "Make sure teachers can pass these tests, too." A number of states and communities are trying to find ways to make teachers more accountable by tying financial incentives to their students' academic performance. A majority of the public — and a stronger majority of employers — supports this concept, but only one in five teachers thinks it is a good idea.

The public, and certainly teachers, are more likely to favor policies that offer teachers rewards for a job well done than policies that penalize them for students' failure to achieve. People see too many other intervening factors, such as previous teachers, family background and parental involvement, as influential in academic success.

Balancing diverging views

In a perfect world, the policy choices would be easier. The public, for example, supports testing teachers and tying financial incentives to student performance, and many education reformers think both are good ideas. But teachers strongly dislike both. And it is teachers who are seen as far more credible than elected officials or school leaders.

A new "National Credibility Index" produced for the Rockefeller Foundation in June compared 44 different types of individuals, such as governors or journalists or entertainers. Teachers were the second most credible on the index, second only to Supreme Court justices.

And a study of parents done for the Education Commission of the States found that teachers are by far the most trusted source of information about schools — far more trusted, for example, than the media or elected officials.

Policymakers will have to balance teachers' concerns the public's willingness to be tough. If a policy issue is framed as one of improving schools and helping students learn more, it may win. But if a policy issue gets framed as blaming or penalizing teachers, it has much less chance of succeeding.

Big questions needing additional exploration

The review of the research revealed a fair amount of information, but it also revealed a number of issues where policymakers are operating without a clear understanding of what the public thinks. Among the key questions we believe should be explored are the following:

- ***Quality Teachers.*** How does the public define a quality teacher? What are the attributes, and how would the public prioritize them? What, for example, does the public think of advanced degrees or board certification as indicators of quality versus number of years of experience? We believe there is at least an undercurrent of public anxiety about the quality of teaching. How is that anxiety best measured? What are the best answers to ease that anxiety?

- ***Content.*** How much do teachers need to know? Does the public really want them to be able to master the rigorous tests states are developing for students? Does it see a difference in what elementary teachers should be able to do versus those who teach middle or high school? How much time and how many tries would the public give teachers to pass proficiency tests? What does the public think about teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities? What do teachers themselves think about the value of these programs, or what would improve them?

- ***Incentives.*** What are the incentives that will recruit bright young people to teaching? How would young people prioritize those incentives? What incentives would attract successful adults to switch careers to go into teaching? What incentives do practicing teachers need to remain as teachers? The research suggests a public willing to provide rewards for teachers who succeed at producing gains in student achievement but far less willing to apply punishments for failure. What is the right balance from the public's perspective of rewards and penalties for teacher performance? What does the public clearly see as too generous, and what does it see as unfair?

- ***Professional Development.*** In focus groups and meetings, teachers often voice complaints about the inadequacy of the training they receive. Do teachers feel that improved and increased professional development will lead to increased achievement for students? What kinds of professional development do teachers feel are most useful? Are there specific kinds of training that the public is more willing to support or that the public does not endorse?

III. Findings

A. What is "teacher quality"?

Just what do we mean when we say "quality teaching?" How do we define "a good teacher"?

Common sense tells us there are many answers to the question of what makes a good teacher. When we discuss teachers in focus groups, people raise a host of characteristics of teachers they have encountered. Some of these are favorable characteristics, and others are complaints. There is, however, little survey data to describe what high-quality teachers are. We found few polls that asked directly what makes a teacher successful in her or his work, and those did not probe the issue directly or at length.

Nevertheless, survey data indicate the following:

Pedagogical style and command of subject matter are both important traits for teachers.

While policymakers and education reformers struggle with the issue of assuring that teachers are high quality, they have often focused on the outcomes — what teachers produce in the way of results with their students. But what is it about teachers that allow them to produce results?

If there is any answer that starts to emerge from these few studies, it is *that pedagogical style and knowledge of the subjects taught* are both seen as important qualities in good teachers.

> High school students report that the kinds of teachers who lead them to learn "a lot more" are teachers who make learning fun (78%), who know the material (71%) and who give students individual attention (69%). Students believe they learn much more also from those teachers who "explain lessons very carefully" (66%) and who care personally about the students as people (64%). On the other hand, only 14% of students say they learn a lot more from "a teacher who teaches by lecturing." (Table A1)

A study asking the public about the importance of six traits and experiences found these traits to be paramount: teachers who are "well-trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively" (92% very important) and "understanding how people learn" (90%). This was closely followed by "ability to communicate well with parents" (86%). Slightly farther down the list were student teaching (79%) and then understanding the community (61%). A strong liberal arts education was not viewed as very significant (37%). This study did not ask specifically about teachers' knowledge of subject taught. (Table A2)

Professors of education put the emphasis on ability to teach.

Professors who provide college and graduate school training for teachers say acquiring pedagogical skills is more important for emerging teachers than is the teacher-trainees' command of their subject matter.

When the professors were asked how essential it is to impart four different qualities to their teacher-trainees, being a "lifelong learner" (84%), "committed to teaching kids to be active learners" (82%) and having "high expectations of all their students" (72%) were cited as absolutely essential by large majorities. Only 57% said it was absolutely essential to make sure teacher-trainees are "deeply knowledgeable about the content of the specific subjects they will be teaching." (Table A3)

Ninety-three percent of professors of education said that "teachers should see themselves as facilitators of learning who enable their students to learn on their own." Only 7% preferred the statement: "Teachers should see themselves as conveyors of knowledge who enlighten their students with what they know." (Table A4)

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Table A1
Kind of Teachers Who Lead Students To Learn More, According to High School Students

Now I am going to talk about different kinds of teachers and ask you if you think that they lead you to learn more or not? Would [*insert item*] lead you to learn a lot more, a little more or would it make no difference?

(% responding "a lot more")

	All public	White	Black	Hispanic	Private school
A teacher who tries to make lessons fun	78%	79%	76%	78%	84%
A teacher who knows a lot about the subject he or she teaches	71%	70%	74%	72%	77%
A teacher who gives students a lot of individual help with their work	69%	67%	76%	69%	78%
A teacher who explains lessons very carefully	66%	64%	72%	72%	71%
A teacher who personally cares about his or her students as people	64%	62%	68%	66%	71%
A teacher who teaches by lecturing	14%	11%	21%	21%	15%

Public Agenda, 1996, N=1,000 high school students

Table A2
Most Important Teacher Qualities, According to the General Public

I want to read you some qualifications that some people feel are important for an excellent teacher to have. For each item, please tell me if you think that quality is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important.

(% saying very important)

	General public	White	Black	Latino	High School or less	Some college	4-yr. college	Post-graduate
Well-trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively	92%	93%	91%	91%	92%	93%	91%	88%
Understanding of how people learn	90%	90%	93%	89%	90%	91%	89%	87%
Ability to communicate well with parents	86%	85%	93%	87%	89%	84%	83%	73%
At least a semester's experience in a classroom as a student teacher	79%	80%	78%	77%	81%	77%	76%	74%
Solid understanding of community in which he or she will teach	61%	58%	74%	70%	68%	57%	48%	49%
A strong liberal arts education	37%	35%	44%	50%	40%	34%	33%	36%

Louis Harris and David Haselkorn conducted for Recruiting New Teachers, 1998, N=2,525 adults

Table A3
Essential Qualities of Teacher Education Program Graduates, According to Professors of Education

Teacher education programs can impart different qualities to their students, and I want to ask which qualities you think are most essential and which are least essential. Please use a 1-5 scale, where 1 means it is least essential and 5 means it is absolutely essential to impart.

	Percent saying "absolutely essential"
Teachers who are themselves lifelong learners and constantly updating their skills	84%
Teachers who are committed to teaching kids to be active learners who know how to learn	82%
Teachers who will have high expectations of all their students	72%
Teachers who are deeply knowledgeable about the content of the specific subjects they will be teaching	57%

Public Agenda, 1997, N=900 professors of education

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Table A4
How Teachers Should View Themselves, According to Professors of Education

Which is closer to your own philosophy of the role of teachers?

	Percent agreeing
Teachers should see themselves as facilitators of learning who enable their students to learn on their own.	93%
Teachers should see themselves as conveyors of knowledge who enlighten their students with what they know.	7%

Public Agenda, 1997, N=700 professors of education

B. How important is teacher quality relative to other aspects of education?

Even though we have few answers from public opinion data to our question of what the public believes constitutes a good teacher, many polls tell us the public believes teachers and their qualifications are critical. Indeed, teachers are viewed as the central elements in making education a success.

Americans say that recruiting and retaining better teachers are among the most important improvements schools could make. Fully 82% say these would be a "big improvement," followed by improvements in computer technology (71%) and class size (70%). (Table B1)

When asked what "education reform" means, one in 10 respondents volunteered "better teachers" — a substantial number for an open-ended question. (Table B2)

When we asked in some large "electronic groups" we helped conduct for *Education Week*, 260 parents, taxpayers and educators selected teacher qualifications as the most important aspect that would indicate to them how schools are performing, topped only by school safety. (Table B3)

Table B1
Proposals To Improve Public Schools, According to the General Public

I'm going to read you a list of proposals people have made about how to improve public schools. For each one I read, please tell me whether you think that would be a big improvement, a small improvement, would make no real difference or would make things worse.

(% saying big improvement)

Recruit and retain better teachers	**82%**
Improve computer equipment and training	71%
Reduce class size	70%
Require standard tests for promotion	70%
Give greater control to the local level	69%
Require teachers to pass a competency test each year	67%
Alternative schools for discipline problems	59%
Teach basic skills using traditional methods	57%
More challenging requirements, fewer electives	57%
Spend more money on education	53%
Introduce a set of national education standards	52%
New teaching methods based on learning research	44%
Downsize school administration	37%
Provide financial rewards for the best teachers	36%
Deemphasize extracurriculars, more academics	34%
Require students to wear school uniforms	26%
Increase homework	23%
Lengthen the school day	19%

Hart and Teeter conducted for *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News, 1997, N=2,010 adults

Table B2
Ideas for Education Reform, According to the General Public

Being as specific as you can — when you think about quote, education reform, unquote, what comes to mind for you personally as education reform? (open-ended question)

Higher standards for graduation	15%
Better teachers	10%
Back to basics — reading, writing, arithmetic	10%

Lake Research Inc. and The Tarrance Group, conducted for the Coalition of America's Children, 1996, N=800 adults

Table B3
Ways To Hold Schools Accountable, According to Parents, Taxpayers and Educators

Twenty-one possible indicators that could be reported to hold schools accountable, rated on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being most important. The indicators are arranged according to what parents say is most important (top) to least important (bottom).

	Mean Scores		
	Parents	**Taxpayers**	**Educators**
School safety	9.6	9.4	9.3
Teacher qualifications	9.3	9.2	8.3
Class size	8.9	7.9	8.8
Graduation rates	8.7	8.2	8.3
Dropout rates	8.3	8.1	7.4
Statewide test scores	8.2	8.0	7.0
Parental satisfaction survey data	8.1	8.0	7.0
SAT/ACT scores	8.1	7.9	6.9
% of students promoted to next grade	8.0	8.1	7.0
Course offerings	7.8	7.9	7.3
Attendance rates	7.8	8.0	7.6
Per-pupil spending	7.6	7.6	8.0
Student satisfaction survey data	7.5	7.0	7.1
Teacher salaries	7.3	7.8	7.6
Hours of homework per week	7.2	7.3	6.3
Number of students	7.2	7.2	6.7
Percent of students who go on to four-year college	7.0	6.9	6.8
Percent of students with A or B average	7.0	6.5	5.8
Number of students per computer	6.9	6.4	6.1
Percent of parents who attend parent-teacher conferences	6.4	6.6	6.3
Demographics of students	4.5	4.6	5.0

Research/Strategy/Management and Belden Russonello & Stewart, conducted for *Education Week*, N=260, parents, taxpayers and educators from electronic groups held in three cities, 1998

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C. Do we have high-quality teachers? How good a job are teachers doing?

Although the public has many complaints about public education, at least on the surface, public opinion data indicate good teachers are seen as an asset for schools. Teacher quality is less of a concern when compared to other school characteristics, which the public in many places perceives as poor, such as safety, physical maintenance of schools and class sizes. A closer look, however, suggests there are underlying worries about the universality of good teachers and that the public sees room for improvement in teacher quality.

On the one hand, teachers are a relative strength for public schools' image.

Teachers are generally rated as good by adults and teenagers.

Fifty-four percent of the urban public says teachers in their schools are excellent or good. (Table C1) Seventy-three percent of high school students rate their teachers as excellent or good. (Table C2)

Twenty-three percent of the public give teachers in their local schools an A and the majority (58%) a B, while giving administrators and school board members considerably weaker marks. (Tables C3, C4 and C5)

When asked to volunteer what needs improvement in schools, problems with teachers come up less frequently than other issues. (Tables C6 and C7)

Teachers themselves have high opinions of the job they do. Fully 95% say teachers are excellent or good. (Table C5) Two-thirds of teachers also say they are very committed to improving education, and they give weaker scores to other key players. (Table C8)

Certainly teachers have a great deal of credibility with the public. A new Credibility Index™ developed recently by R/S/M for the Public Relations Society of America Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation compares the public's views of a wide array of types of public figures — elected officials at various levels, entertainers, professionals and so on. Teachers rank as the second most credible members of society, right after Supreme Court justices and ahead of governors, mayors, members of Congress and other politicians. (Table C9)

On the other hand, the public worries about weaknesses in the ranks of teachers.

Other questions reveal a less rosy picture of the public's faith in the nation's teaching work force. Taking a longer look, survey questions begin to reveal a level of discomfort with the ability of schools to maintain quality teaching staff.

> According to our study for the National School Boards Foundation, less than half (41%) of the public in the nation's largest urban areas is ready to commend local public schools for doing an excellent or good job of hiring and keeping high-quality teachers. (Table C10)
>
> Similarly, only 28% of the public nationwide is "very" satisfied with local schools for having well-qualified teachers. More people are just "fairly" satisfied (33%). (Table C11)
>
> Four in 10 -- 42% -- of high school students in a Public Agenda survey think "too many teachers doing a bad job" is a problem in their schools. (Table C12)
>
> And the outlook for the future is not very optimistic. Only three in 10 of the general public say we are "getting better-trained and more capable teachers in our public schools," compared to 20 years ago. (Table C13)

The public also worries that too many teachers do not have the needed teaching skills.

According to students and parents, while *many* teachers teach well, *all* do not — and this may create an undercurrent of doubt. Certainly, in focus groups we often hear complaints about individual teachers' ability to reach children effectively, even as parents concede many other teachers are effective.

> Forty-seven percent of parents say some or a few teachers have poor teaching skills, and 7% say most or all of their children's teachers' skills are poor. Thirty-seven percent believe some or a few of their children's teachers should not be in classrooms. Ten percent say most or all "don't belong in a classroom." (Table C14)

> Few high school students believe that most of their teachers do things students regard as very helpful in learning more — such as making learning fun (24%), giving individual help (31%), explaining the lessons carefully (33%) and caring about the students (30%). (Table C15)

Students and parents appear in a few questions to have somewhat more faith in the command that teachers have of their subjects than they have in their teaching ability.

> A little less than half of students (46%) say most of the teachers know a lot about the subjects they teach. (Table C15)

> Parents are considerably more sanguine on this topic than they are about teaching skills; 75% of parents say all or most of their children's teachers "know their subject matter very well." Seventeen percent of parents, on the other hand, say only some, a few or none know the subject matter well. (Table C14)

Meanwhile, teachers in many focus groups complain about the need to teach subjects for which they feel ill-equipped. This was corroborated in a survey question.

> Twenty-two percent of teachers say they have taught outside their subject. (Table C16)

In summary

These data from disparate sources and findings from our focus groups around the country have shown that the public recognizes teaching as a major ingredient in schools' success, and that teachers are seen as one of the better aspects of public schools. That does not mean, however, that the public thinks the quality of teaching is as good as it should be or that the public regards all teachers as good. In fact, when we scratch the surface, it looks from this vantage point as though the public is disturbed about some aspects of teacher quality — perhaps with *some* teachers.

In focus groups, we have heard numerous complaints from parents about individual teachers (as opposed to teachers more generally invoked in poll questions) who do not live up to high standards — both in teaching ability and in command of subject matter.

While the existing data are not conclusive, our hypothesis is that there is an undercurrent of anxiety about maintaining high-quality teaching. Even if many teachers in a school are good, there is also widespread knowledge or rumor when some teachers fail or are unpopular. This needs to be more fully explored. In the absence of more exploration, nevertheless, we feel policymakers who address the issue of teacher quality are, in fact, speaking to very real concerns about who is in the classroom.

Table C1
Job Rating of Teachers, According to the Urban Public and Urban School Board Members

Please tell me how good a job you think each of the following is doing. If you don't know enough about any of them, just say so. Would you say that _____ is [are] doing an excellent, fair, poor or very poor job?

	Excellent/ Good	Fair	Poor/ Very Poor	Don't Know
Urban Public				
The teachers in public schools in your community	54%	24%	9%	13%
Principals in public schools in your community	43%	28%	9%	20%
The superintendent of public schools in your community	35%	24%	12%	29%
School Board Members				
The teachers in public schools in your community	76%	21%	1%	2%
Principals in public schools in your community	75%	21%	1%	3%
The superintendent of public schools in your community	69%	18%	7%	6%

Belden Russonello & Stewart, conducted for the National School Boards Foundation, 1998, N=1,000 urban adults and 100 urban school board members

Table C2
Grading Teachers, According to the Public

What grade would you give the teachers in the local public schools?

	1997	1989	1984
A & B	81%	83%	78%
A	23%	20%	18%
B	58%	63%	60%%
C	16%	15%	17%
D	1%	1%	2%
Fail	*	*	*
Don't know	2%	1%	3%

Phi Delta Kappa Teachers' Poll, 1997, N=714 public school teachers

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Table C3
Grading School Administrators, According to the Public

What grade would you give the administrators in the local public schools?

	1997	1989	1984
A & B	47%	49%	44%
A	7%	9%	10%
B	40%	40%	34%
C	32%	36%	34%
D	13%	11%	15%
Fail	7%	3%	5%
Don't know	1%	1%	2%

Phi Delta Kappa Teachers' Poll, 1997, N=714 public school teachers

Table C4
Grading Local School Boards, According to the Public

What grade would you give the local school board?

	1997	1989	1984
A & B	64%	57%	49%
A	23%	17%	14%
B	41%	40%	35%
C	25%	32%	33%
D	8%	7%	10%
Fail	2%	3%	6%
Don't know	1%	1%	2%%

Phi Delta Kappa Teachers' Poll, 1997, N=714 public school teachers

Table C5
Rating Teacher Quality, According to High School Students and Teachers

How would you rate your school on the following issues — excellent, pretty good, good, only fair or poor? — the quality of teachers in your school.

	Percent saying excellent/pretty good
Students	73%
Teachers	95%

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., conducted for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1996, N=2,500 middle and high school students; N of teachers not reported

Table C6
Biggest Problems Facing Local Schools, According to the General Public, Parents and Nonparents

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools of this community must deal? (open-ended question)

	National totals	No children in School	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
Fighting/violence/gangs	15%	14%	20%	10%
Lack of discipline/more control	14%	15%	9%	29%
Lack of financial support/funding/money	12%	13%	11%	2%
Use of drugs/dope	10%	10%	12%	8%
Overcrowded schools	8%	5%	11%	22%
Concern about standards/quality of education	6%	6%	5%	9%
Difficulty getting good teachers/quality teachers	5%	6%	4%	-
None	3%	2%	5%	7%
Don't know	16%	19%	10%	8%

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, 1998, N=1,151 adults

Table C7
Most Important Problems Facing Schools, According to the California Public and Parents

What do you think is the most important problem facing your local public schools today? Is there another problem facing your local public schools that is almost as important?

	All	Parents	Parents 5-11	Parents 12-17	White Parents	Black Parents	Latino Parents	Asian Parents
Administrative (net)	31%	31%	29%	34%	42%	34%	21%	13%
Crime (net)	19%	19%	17%	21%	11%	20%	30%	33%
Teachers (net)	**10%**	**9%**	**10%**	**8%**	**10%**	**11%**	**9%**	**3%**
Teachers without enough training	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	7%	9%	2%
Teachers who can't control their classes	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	-	1%
Other problems with teachers	2%	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	-	-
Infrastructure (net)	10%	11%	11%	10%	11%	15%	10%	11%
Other (net)	85%	7%	8%	7%	8%	11%	6%	5%
Don't know	6	2	2%	3%	1%	4%	1%	7%

Los Angeles Times Poll, 1997, N=2,804 California adults, including 1,281 parents

Table C8
Commitment of Various Players to School Improvement, According to Teachers

How strongly committed do you think each of the following people is to improving education in the public schools in your community?

	Very committed	Quite committed	Not very committed	Not at all committed	Don't know
Local teachers	64%	32%	3%	1%	*
Local superintendent of schools	41%	38%	15%	3%	3%
Local school board	30%	44%	18%	6%	2%
Governor	13%	28%	37%	17%	5%
State legislature	7%	25%	51%	12%	5%

Phi Delta Kappa Teacher's Poll, 1996, N=510 public school teachers

Table C9
National Credibility Index™

	Credibility Score*
Supreme Court Justice	81.3
Teacher	**80.7**
National expert	78.6
Member of the Armed Forces	73.0
Local business owner	72.2
Ordinary citizen	71.8
Local religious leader	71.8
High-ranking military officer	71.7
School official	**71.3**
National leader of people with shared common traits	71.1
National religious leader	69.2
Network TV news anchor	66.8
Governor	66.8
Representative for a local newspaper or TV station	66.6
Reporter for a local newspaper or TV station	65.8
National civil rights leader	65.6
Locally elected council member or supervisor	65.2
U.S. senator	64.2
Nationally syndicated news columnist	64.0
Mayor of a large city	63.5
Head of a state government agency or department	63.1
Head of a local government agency or department	62.9
Reporter for a major newspaper or news magazine	62.4
U.S. congressman	62.2
Credibility Index	61.5
President of a large corporation	61.6
Local civil rights leader	60.3
U.S. Vice President	60.2
Head of a national business or industry association	59.6
Community activist	59.2
Wall Street executive	57.9
Head of a presidential advisory board	57.6
U.S. president	56.9
Member of a president's cabinet	56.1
Pollster	55.9
Student activist	53.3
Local labor union leader	53.3
Candidate for public office	53.1
Head of a national labor union	53.0
Famous athlete	52.1
Head of a national interest group	51.3
Political party leader	48.6
Public relations specialist	47.6
Famous entertainer	46.8
TV or radio talk show host	46.6

Research/Strategy/Management, Inc., conducted for the Public Relations Society of America Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation, 1998, N=1,000 adults

*Respondents were asked to rate the credibility of public figures according to "how believable or unbelievable you think they are when they speak out on a public issues: very credible, somewhat credible, not so credible or not at all credible." Responses were recoded into 0 (not at all) to 100 (very).

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Table C10
Hiring and Retaining Quality Teachers, Principals and Superintendents, According to the Urban Public and Urban School Board Members

How good a job do you feel your local public schools are doing at _____? An excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job?

	Excellent /good	Fair	Poor/ very poor	Don't know
Urban public				
Hiring and keeping high-quality teachers	41%	29%	15%	15%
Hiring and keeping high-quality principals	38%	28%	11%	22%
Hiring and keeping high-quality superintendents	36%	24%	12%	28%
School board members				
Hiring and keeping high-quality teachers	68%	25%	7%	--
Hiring and keeping high-quality principals	69%	30%	1%	--
Hiring and keeping high-quality superintendents	66%	21%	11%	2%

Belden Russonello & Stewart, conducted for the National School Boards Foundation, 1998, N=1,000 adults and 100 school board members

Table C11
Satisfaction with Quality of Teachers, According to the General Public

Please tell me whether you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, just somewhat satisfied or not very satisfied with the performance of the public schools in your area on... having well-qualified teachers.

Very satisfied	28%
Fairly satisfied	33%
Just somewhat satisfied	19%
Not very satisfied	10%
Not sure	10%

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, conducted for Milken Family Foundation's Milken Exchange on Education Technology, 1997, N=approximately 500 adults. (This was a split sample question of N= 1,012)

Table C12
Seriousness of Teachers Doing a Bad Job, According to High School Students

Here are some problems different schools could have. Please tell me how serious a problem this is in your school. *[Insert Item]* Is that a very serious, somewhat serious or not too serious problem in your school? (% responding "very serious" or "somewhat serious.")

	All public	White	Black	Hispanic	Private school
Too many teachers are doing a bad job	42%	36%	56%	45%	22%

Public Agenda, 1996, N=1,000 high school students

Table C13
Teacher Quality Compared to 20 Years Ago, According to the General Public

Compared to 20 years ago, would you say we are getting better-trained and more capable teachers in our public schools, not so good or not much different than we had then?

Better trained	31%
Not so good	36%
Not much different	29%
Not sure	4%

Yankelovich Partners, Inc., conducted for Time/CNN, 1999, N=1,031 adults

Table C14
How Many Teachers Have Skills, According to Parents

How many of your child's teachers [*Insert item*]? Would you say all, most, some, a few or none?

	All	Most	Some	A few	None	Don't know
Know their subject very well	43%	35%	11%	5%	1%	7%
Have poor teaching skills	2%	5%	16%	31%	36%	11%
Don't belong in a classroom	5%	5%	10%	27%	44%	9%

Public Agenda, 1997, N=700 parents of public school K-12 children

Table C15
How Many Teachers Help Students Learn More in Various Ways, According to High School Students

And, about how many of your teachers are like that now? Would you say most, some or very few? (% responding "most" of their teachers are like item now)

	All public	White	Black	Hispanic	Private school
A teacher who tries to make lessons fun	24%	25%	25%	23%	39%
A teacher who knows a lot about the subject he or she teachers	46%	47%	49%	47%	63%
A teacher who gives students a lot of individual help with their work	31%	33%	31%	31%	51%
A teacher who explains lessons very carefully	33%	33%	38%	35%	48%
A teacher who personally cares about his or her students as people	30%	30%	31%	31%	58%
A teacher who teaches by lecturing	23%	22%	27%	23%	24%

Public Agenda, 1996, N=1,000 high school students

Table C16
Teaching Without Formal Certification, According to Teachers

Have you ever taught in a subject area for which you do not have formal certification?	
Yes	22%
No	78%
Don't know/refuse	1%

Greenberg Research, Inc. & The Feldman Group, conducted for the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996, N=848 members of NEA

D. How can high-quality teaching be achieved?

Recognizing the importance of teachers to improving education, many policymakers are now focused on the question of how to secure high-quality teachers. Four large policy issues surround developing, recruiting and maintaining high-quality teachers in public schools. Two of these areas are processes through which prospective and actual teachers pass:

- *Teacher education* at the college and graduate school level
- *Professional development* during a teacher's career.

The other two means for achieving high-quality teaching that we hear discussed frequently are standards to be met:

- Only admit individuals to the profession if they are qualified via *certification* and *proficiency test*
- Holding teachers and others *accountable*, by rewarding or punishing teachers, principals or others on the basis of student outcomes, most often student test results.

One thing that is clear is that Americans want educators to pay greater attention to helping teachers achieve and maintain high quality. In a carrot-and-stick approach, the public endorses spending school resources on teacher professional development, as well as on financial incentives for teachers who improve student academic performance. While offering this assistance to teachers, the public is demanding greater accountability, reflected in broad public support for proficiency tests for new teachers and periodic tests for all teachers.

The processes of teacher education and ongoing professional development

There is a dearth of data dealing with what the public or teachers believe about the contributions of their college or graduate school education to the success or excellence of teachers. One piece of evidence, from the Phi Delta Kappa study of teachers in 1997, indicates that about a quarter of teachers (23%) believe the college training ("teacher education training") they received deserves an A, four in 10 (41%) say it deserves a B, and 25% a C. (Table D1)

As compared to the issue of college preparation, there is a considerable body of public opinion data on professional development. Also, this is an issue we have discussed in many focus groups with parents and teachers.

The public supports professional development for teachers in many ways.

The research shows the public believes we do not do enough to support teachers' professional development, and the public would welcome change.

> Eighty-five percent favor "school-financed professional development opportunities" as a way to attract and retain good teachers. (Table D2)
>
> The public supports expanding the time and resources available to teachers for professional development. Fully seven in 10 (71%) would like to see teachers paid for more hours, so they can stay up with developments. (Table D3)
>
> Sixty-one percent support "lengthening the school year and providing more time within each school day for professional development of teachers." (Table D4)
>
> According to public opinion, spending on training teachers is inadequate (64% say too little money is spent), and 70% want to see it increased. (Tables D5 and D6)
>
> The public in the nation's largest urban areas gives ongoing professional development very high ratings in terms of impact on more learning by students. Fifty-two percent give a 10 on a 10-point scale to the proposal of "sending teachers to get more training every few years so they can keep their skills up to date." This places it in the topmost tier of effective initiatives to bring about more student learning. (Table D7)

On the other hand, focus group participants have made us very sensitive to the complaints that professional development days often are great inconveniences for parents and that they take instructional time away from students. Thus, while the principle of continuing education is obviously enthusiastically endorsed, careful scheduling is essential so that it does not inconvenience families or appear to serve children poorly.

Teachers have experienced a great deal of professional development opportunities.

According to studies among teachers, professional development programs are common. We have just a little data on their utility, however, (mainly from five-to-six-year-old data from the U.S. Department of Education).

> Most teachers report having some sort of professional development experience, including a great deal within the previous year. (Tables D11 and D12)
>
> Most believe some of their professional development experiences provided new information and caused them to change their teaching and seek out more information; few call it generally a waste of time. (Table D13)
>
> Traditional conferences and workshops are mentioned by about one-third of

teachers as experiences that improved their teaching, and observing other teachers and mentoring are singled out as being productive as well. (Table D14)

One survey of teachers asked about the kinds of professional development experiences in a seminar setting that they would find most useful.

Most teachers suggest learning more about process and pedagogy — *how* to teach — rather than about the subject matter.

Also, teachers exhibit a great deal of interest in how to involve parents, use technology, update skills, make schools safe and work as effective team members. (Table D15)

There is some evidence that principals and school board members do not identify increasing professional development as a key need.

For example, principals do not view "inadequacy of professional development" as a particular problem, according to the U.S. Department of Education Public School principals' survey: 27% say it is not at all a barrier to applying higher standards, and 64% say it is only a small (35%) or moderate (29%) problem. Only 8% call it a great barrier. (Table D9)

Also, school board members in urban districts are less eager than the public to push for more professional development. As we noted earlier, 52% of the urban public gave it a "10," that is, called it very effective as a way to increase student learning. Only 37% of the school board members in urban districts gave it such a high score. (Table D10)

Teachers identify salary over professional development as important to their desire to remain teaching.

Teachers said in one study that increasing the opportunity for more professional development was not as effective in retaining teachers as better pay and benefits and an improved teaching environment, including better discipline, safety and class sizes. These are the same aspects of schools that parents and the public generally raise in surveys and focus group research as important to improve education. (Table D8)

The existing public opinion data indicate that the public is enthusiastic about more investment in professional training, and teachers have found it beneficial in the past.

Board members and principals, however, appear (from what we can glean here) to be less sanguine about the potential impacts of more professional development. Thus, they may be a more difficult audience to rally.

In the existing research, many teachers express interest in more programs in a variety of areas including technology, safety and team building.

Policymakers and education experts often report anecdotally that teachers are disenchanted with teacher training and professional development that has been offered. This is clearly an area where more research could illuminate existing predispositions as well as attitudes about needs and most productive possible avenues to pursue in professional development and in teacher training.

Standards for teachers to meet

The public sees testing individuals to establish their fitness to be teachers as effective policy.

Moving beyond preparation of teachers, policymakers are also seeking to confirm teachers' skills with hard measures. The public is strongly in favor of proficiency tests for teachers, making certain they have the ability to perform on the job. Both proving ability before embarking as a teacher and continuing to prove one's capability over time are very popular policies, according to public opinion polls.

In Massachusetts, 86% of the public favors introducing "a system of testing new teachers before they can be certified." (Table D16)

In the just-released 1999 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup survey, fully 97% said those who want to be teachers should be "required to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach, before they are hired." (Table D17)

Eight in ten (81%) support "testing teachers to ensure they are qualified in the area they teach." (Table D18)

Seventy-eight percent of the public favors requiring "teachers to pass proficiency tests on the subject they teach every couple of years." (Table D19)

Looking back at Table B1, two-thirds (67%) of the public said requiring teachers to pass competency tests each year "would be a big improvement" in public schools. (Table B1)

Seventy-three percent of Massachusetts' residents favor "testing all existing teachers on minimum competency and knowledge of their subjects every five years and dismissing those teachers who fail twice." (Table D20)

The 1999 Phi Delta Kappa study also suggests that the public believes the academic degree of teachers should be important in determining a teacher's salary (60% very important). Fewer, but still a majority (52%), say years of teaching is very important. (Table D21)

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Accountability is a popular principle but has devilish details.

The issue of educator accountability for student achievement has moved front and center in education reform circles. Among ECS constituents — both ECS commissioners and policymakers — accountability ranked as the most important education issue facing their state (Table D23), outpacing assessment, finance and professional development.

Reviewing focus group experience and looking at the relatively few survey questions about accountability suggest it is a potential minefield. In principle, holding anyone — professionals, children, parents — accountable for delivering on what they are supposed to do, is, of course, popular. So considering answers to questions on accountability in isolation, one is tempted to conclude the public favors rewarding and punishing teachers on the basis of student achievement. For example, the idea of "holding teachers accountable for student learning and rewarding them . . .if students do well" gets a 7.3 from the urban public on a 10-point scale of improving student learning. (Table D7)

This is far from the whole picture, however. For one thing, this kind of suggestion when compared to other efforts is among the least impressive ideas. Looking at Table D6, 11 other proposals for improving student achievement that we tested — from efforts to involve parents to professional development, enhanced safety and discipline — received higher scores than "holding teachers accountable for student learning."

Second, when the wording of questions proposes *rewards* but does not mention punishment, the policies garner some acceptance. About half of parents (53%) call "tying improved academic performance to financial incentives for teachers and principals" a good idea, and 60% of employers call it a good idea. (Table D23) When *punishment* rather than reward is suggested, support falls off precipitously.

Third, the public is very uncomfortable with the notion of pegging teachers' or educators' careers to students' academic success. People see too many other intervening factors, such as previous teachers, family background and parental involvement, as influential in academic success.

> Two-thirds of the public (66%) disagreed with the proposed policy of paying teachers according "to how well their students perform on tests that measure academic performance," according to a poll conducted for Recruiting New Teachers. (Table D24)
>
> Corroboration is found in another study for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Making "salary depend on student performance" is one of the least popular ideas. (Table D25)

Teachers only infrequently witness the firing of a colleague because of that poor student achievement.

> Two-thirds (64%) of public school teachers said no "teachers had been removed because of persistently poor performance by their students" in the time that they have been teaching at their school. Twenty-three percent said one or two had been removed, and 9% said more than two. (Table D26)

As we have seen earlier, educators depart from the public and take a more unfavorable position on financial incentives.

> Teachers and the college professors who teach them take a considerably dimmer view of tying student improvements to financial incentives for educators, than does the public. Thirty-two percent of professors and only 22% of teachers say this is a good idea, whereas a slight majority of the general public approved the concept. (Table D23)

In summary

The public is strongly in favor of requiring teachers to be measured against objective tests of their own skills and knowledge, and may entertain policies that reward educators who move children forward. Americans in general and educators in particular,. However, are reluctant to embrace proposals that appear to punish teachers or principals when students fail. The latter is a much harder sell, as people believe it holds great potential for inequities and unfairness. Policymakers should hold proposals for teacher accountability plans up to the light of public perception prior to embarking on what may be perceived as unfair policies that engender backlash and distrust.

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Table D1
Grades Given to Teacher Training, By Teachers

What grade would you give the teacher education training you received?

	1997	1989	1984
A & B	64%	57%	49%
A	23%	17%	14%
B	41%	40%	35%
C	25%	32%	33%
D	8%	7%	10%
Fail	2%	3%	6%
Don't know	1%	1%	2%

Phi Delta Kappa Teacher's Poll, 1997, N=714 public school teachers

Table D2
Ways To Attract Good Teachers, According to the General Public

Here are some ways that have been suggested for attracting and retaining good public school teachers. As I read off each suggestion, would you tell me whether you favor it or oppose it as a way to attract and retain good teachers?

	Favor	Oppose	Don't know
Increase pay for teachers who demonstrate high performance	90%	9%	1%
Loans and scholarships for prospective teachers	86%	12%	2%
School-financed professional development opportunities	85%	12%	3%
Tax credits for teachers who demonstrate high performance	63%	37%	*
Increased pay for all teachers	62%	37%	1%

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup 1999, N=1,103 adults

Table D3
Paying Teachers to Stay Up to Date in Their Fields, According to the General Public

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Public schools should pay teachers for longer work days so they have time to stay up with new developments in their own fields.

Agree	71%

Louis Harris and David Haselkorn conducted for Recruiting New Teachers, 1998, N=2,525 adults

Table D4
Lengthening School Year for Teacher Interaction with Students, According to the General Public

Would you favor or oppose lengthening the school year and providing more time within each school day for professional development of teachers?

Favor	61%
Oppose	36%
Don't know	3%

Louis Harris and David Haselkorn, conducted for Recruiting New Teachers, 1998, N=2,525 adults

Table D5
Spending on Training Teachers, According to the General Public

In general, do you think that we spend too much money, too little money or about the right amount on training teachers?

Too much money	5%
Too little money	64%
About the right amount	31%

Marist College Institute for Public Opinion, 1997, N=919 adults

Table D6
Funding for Programs To Keep Teachers Up To Date, According to Parents

Now I am going to ask you some general questions. The federal government currently provides money for a variety of different programs in schools. I'm going to read you a list of these programs. For each one, please tell me whether you think funding for that program should be increased, decreased or remain about the same — programs to help teachers learn new techniques and stay up to date in their fields.

Increase	70%
Same	23%
Decrease	5%
Don't know	1%

Bennet, Petts & Blumenthal, conducted for the National Parent Teachers Association, 1998, N=800 parents of children in public schools

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Table D7
Holding Teachers Accountable for Student's Learning as Compared to Other Policies, According to the Urban Public

Here is a list of ideas that some people have suggested would help students learn more in public schools. I'd like you to consider your own local schools. Think of a scale where *zero* means something would not be at all effective, five would mean it would be *somewhat* effective, and *10* means it would be *extremely* effective in really increasing how much students learn. How would you rate ____ in terms of how effective it would be in increasing students' learning?

	% saying 10	Mean
Parental involvement		
Requiring parents to meet with their children's teachers twice a year at times convenient for the parents' schedules	57%	8.4
Giving parents specific guidelines about how to become involved in their children's homework	49%	8.2
Academic support and accountability		
Providing summer school, after-school programs and tutoring to students who are behind academically	54%	8.5
Raising academic standards in public schools; that is, continuing to make the curriculum tougher and insisting that children meet high academic standards	40%	7.8
Holding teachers accountable for student learning and rewarding them with more pay and seniority when their students do well	37%	7.3
School environment		
Bringing more discipline and safety into the schools	53%	8.3
Teaching respect for racial, ethnic and social diversity	51%	8.0
Professional development		
Sending teachers to get more training every few years so they keep their skills up to date	52%	8.3
Reduce class size		
Hiring more teachers and reducing class size in the public schools	48%	8.1
Providing resources		
Providing students more up-to-date textbooks	45%	7.9
Putting more computers and computer-trained teachers into the public schools	45%	7.8
Providing more materials and supplies for classes and labs	42%	7.9
Buildings		
Improving the existing school buildings so they are clean and safe	38%	7.5
Building more school buildings	28%	6.5
Business involvement		
Getting businesspeople more involved as volunteers and mentors	34%	7.5

Belden Russonello & Stewart, conducted for the National School Boards Foundation, 1998, N=1,000 adults

Table D8
Effective Steps Toward Retention, According to Teachers

What would be the most effective step that schools might take to encourage teachers to remain in teaching?

	Stayers*	Movers*	Leavers*
Providing higher salaries or better fringe benefits	53.1%	47.2%	39.9%
Decreasing class size	10.4%	12.3%	6.8%
Giving teachers more authority in the school and in their classrooms	5.7%	5.2%	8.9%
Dealing more effectively with student discipline and making schools safer	16.0%	16.7%	20.6%
Reducing teacher workload	3.0%	2.5%	2.3%
Reducing the paperwork burden on teachers	1.9%	2.1%	1.8%
Improving opportunities for professional advancement	2.1%	3.4%	4.7%
Increasing parent involvement in the school	1.1%	1.4%	2.1%
Increasing standards for student' academic performance	1.1%	1.9%	2.6%
Providing better resources and materials for classroom use	1.2%	2.5%	1.2%
Giving special recognition to outstanding teachers	0.7%	1.1%	1.0%
Providing merit pay or other pay incentives to teachers	0.6%	1.0%	0.9%
Providing more support for new teachers (e.g., mentor teacher programs)	1.5%	1.0%	4.5%
Improving opportunities for professional development	**0.7%**	**0.4%**	**1.6%**
Providing tuition reimbursement for coursework required for certification or career advancement	0.5%	1.1%	0.4%
Revising health insurance program to include stress-reduction training (e.g., seminars, counseling)	0.3%	--	0.6%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up survey, 1994-95, N=6,323 current and former public and private school teachers

*"Stayers" are defined as teachers who remain teaching in the same school from year to year; "movers" have been defined as teachers who move from one school to another, and "leavers" have been defined as teachers who are leaving the profession between one school year and the next.

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Table D9
Barriers to High Standards, According to Principals

To what extent are the following items barriers to applying high standards to all students in your school?

	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Inadequacy of guidance on what standards to use	27%	36%	27%	10%
Inadequacy of parent involvement	17%	35%	29%	20%
Inadequacy of professional development	**27%**	**35%**	**29%**	**8%**
Outdated textbooks	45%	33%	16%	6%
Outdated technology	32%	27%	22%	18%
High student mobility	27%	39%	19%	16%
Diversity of student populations	35%	36%	21%	8%
Language barriers	61%	26%	9%	4%
Teaching students who are at different levels	12%	32%	39%	17%
Assessments that do not measure what students can do	14%	38%	31%	17%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Public School Survey on Education Reform," FRSS 54, 1996, N=1,360 public school principals

Table D10
Effectiveness of Professional Development, By Urban School Board Members and the Urban Public

Q31 (School board), Q33 (Urban public). Here is a list of ideas that some people have suggested would help students learn more in public schools. I'd like you to consider your own local schools. Think of a scale, where *zero* means something would not be at all effective, five would mean it would be *somewhat* effective and *10* means it would be *extremely* effective in really increasing how much students learn. How would you rate sending teachers to get more training every few years so they keep their skills up to date in terms of how effective it would be in increasing students' learning?

	% calling item very effective (10)
School Board Members	**37%**
Total Urban Public	**52%**

Belden Russonello & Stewart, conducted for the National School Boards Foundation, 1998, N=1,000 adults and 100 school board members in urban areas

Table D11
Participation in Professional Development Activities, According to Teachers

Percentage of teachers who had participated in various types of professional development activities since the end of last school year, by sector:

	Public schools	Private schools
Any of these types of professional development activities (Net)	**96.3%**	**90.8%**
Workshops or inservice programs sponsored by districts (public schools) or affiliated organizations (private schools)	87.5%	70.3%
School-sponsored workshops or inservice programs	81.3%	73.4%
University extension or adult education courses	25.2%	21.1%
College courses in their subject field	25.4%	19.9%
Growth activities sponsored by professional associations	51.4%	43.0%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993-94, N=55,118 public and private school teachers

Table D12
Participation in Professional Growth, According to Teachers

Now I'm going to read you a list of professional growth experiences which some teachers have had. For each one, please tell me whether or not you have participated in that particular activity during your teaching career.* The first activity is...

Attending a professional conference	96%
Taking courses at a college or university	95%
Helping to develop school curricula	94%
Observing other teachers to learn their techniques	91%
Learning how to use new technologies, such as computers and teleconferencing	91%
Increasing your knowledge through independent study	90%
Participating in seminars on education-related issues in settings other than a college or university	90%
Taking classes at a teacher center, museum or library	84%
Serving on a textbook or software adoption committee	77%
Working with a group to develop new student assessments	77%
Conducting program evaluations	76%
Serving as a member of a group study project	71%
Establishing and maintaining a mentoring relationship, either as a mentor or mentee	67%
Conducting action research, *i.e.*, identifying an issue in your teaching, collecting data and revising your approach based on data analysis	61%
Giving or receiving peer reviews	57%
Conducting educational research	53%
Leading a seminar for teachers	51%
Collaborating with a museum or other cultural or scientific organization	44%
Presenting at a professional conference	43%
Participating in an on-line teacher discussion group about student learning	41%
Engaging in distance learning	29%
Writing a paper for publication	27%
Participating in a study tour	26%

Greenberg Research, Inc. & The Feldman Group, conducted for the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996

* The questions were asked of split samples of either N=413 or N=387 NEA members.

Table D13
Influence of Professional Development on Practices, According to Teachers Participating in Programs

Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed that activities had various impacts on their teaching practices (% that strongly agreed/agreed with the statement)

	Public schools	Private schools
Provided me with new information	84.9%	85.7%
Caused me to change my teaching practices	64.7%	62.7%
Caused me to seek further information/training	62.6%	60.6%
Changed my views on teaching	41.7%	40.8%
Generally wasted my time	10.5%	7.4%

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993-94, N= approximately 65,800 teachers who had participated in professional development programs on various topics

Table D14
Better Teaching Through Professional Growth, According to Teachers Who had Taken Part in Programs

Which of those experiences, if any, have brought about an improvement in the way you teach?*	
Observing other teachers to learn their techniques	34%
Attending a professional conference	34%
Participating in seminars on education-related issues	30%
Taking courses at a college or university	24%
Helping to develop school curricula	24%
Writing a paper for publication	22%
Learning how to use new technologies such as computers and teleconferencing	21%
Taking classes at a teaching center, museum or library	16%
Establishing and maintaining a mentoring relationship, either as a mentor or mentee	15%
Working with a group to develop new student assessments	14%
Increasing your knowledge through independent study	13%
Conducting action research, *i.e.*, identifying an issue in your teaching, collecting data and revising your approach based on data analysis	13%
Giving or receiving peer review	10%
Serving as a member of a group study project	10%
Participating in an on-line teacher discussion group about student learning	8%
Conducting program evaluations	8%
Leading a seminar for teachers	8%
Conducting educational research	7%
Presenting at a professional conference	7%
Collaborating with a museum or other cultural or scientific organization	6%
Serving on a textbook or software adoption committee	6%
Participating in a study tour	3%
Writing a paper for publication	2%
Engaging in distance learning	2%

Greenberg Research, Inc. & The Feldman Group, conducted for the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996

* The questions were asked of split samples of either N=413 or N=387 NEA members.

Table D15
Topics of Interest for Seminars, According to Teachers

Next I'm going to read you a list of topics that might be addressed in a seminar. For each topic, please tell me how interested you would be in attending a seminar on that subject. The first topic is (READ TOPIC). Would you be very interested, somewhat interested, not very interested or not at all interested in attending a seminar on this subject?

	Interested	Not	Very	Some-what	Not very	Not at all	Don't know/ Refuse
Increasing parental involvement	93%	7%	65%	28%	4%	3%	0%
Using technology for instructional purposes	93%	7%	64%	29%	5%	2%	0%
Updating your knowledge and skills	90%	10%	56%	34%	6%	4%	0%
Making schools safe	85%	15%	51%	33%	10%	5%	0%
Working effectively as a team with your colleagues	84%	16%	41%	43%	10%	6%	0%
Working with students whose language and/or culture is different from your own	78%	22%	37%	41%	14%	8%	1%
Communicating effectively with school administrators	73%	26%	29%	44%	17%	10%	0%
Managing time in your classroom	68%	32%	25%	43%	19%	12%	0%
Classroom management	67%	33%	22%	45%	20%	13%	0%

Greenberg Research, Inc. & The Feldman Group, conducted for the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1996, N=848 members of the National Education Association (NEA) and affiliated organizations and 228 NEA leaders

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Table D16
Support for Testing Teachers' Minimum Competency Prior to Certification, According to Massachusetts Residents

The state has also introduced a system of testing new teachers before they can be certified. Do you favor or oppose testing new teachers for minimum competency?

	Favor	Oppose	Not sure
October '98	86%	8%	6%

Opinion Dynamics, conducted for Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 1998, N=500 Massachusetts adult residents

Table D17
Desirability of Proving Knowledge of Subjects Before Hiring Teachers, According to the Public

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers be required to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach, before they are hired?

	National totals	No children in school	Public school parents
Yes	97%	97%	96%
No	3%	3%	4%
Don't know	*	*	*

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup 1999, N=1,103 adults

Table D18
Support for Testing Teachers to Ensure Qualifications, According to the Public

Following are some proposals that have been recommended to improve public education. Please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each proposal — testing teachers to ensure they are qualified in the area they teach.

Strongly support	81%
Somewhat support	10%
Somewhat oppose	2%
Strongly oppose	2%
Don't know	5%

Penn Schoen & Berland Associates for the Democratic Leadership Council, 1988, N= 1,400 adults

Table D19
Support for Teacher Proficiency Tests, According to the Public

Thinking about public school teachers for a moment, do you favor or oppose requiring that public school teachers pass proficiency tests on the school subjects that they teach every couple of years? Is that strongly or somewhat?

Strongly favor	78%
Somewhat favor	16%
Somewhat oppose	3%
Strongly oppose	3%
Don't know/refuse	*

Wirthlin Worldwide, 1998, N=1002 adults

Table D20
Support for Testing Teachers' Minimum Competency Every Five Years, According to Massachusetts Residents

Would you favor or oppose testing all existing teachers on minimum competency and knowledge of their subjects every five years and dismissing those teachers who fail the test twice?

	Favor	Oppose	Not sure
October '98	73%	20%	7%

Opinion Dynamics, conducted for Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 1998, N=500 Massachusetts adult residents

Table D21
Importance of Three Factors in Determining Teachers' Salaries, According to the Public

How important do you think each of the following factors should be in determining a public school teacher's salary? Very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	Don't know
Level of academic degree earned	60%	33%	5%	1%	1%
Years of teaching experience	52%	35%	9%	4%	*
Scores the teacher's students receive on standardized tests	47%	38%	10%	4%	1%

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup 1999, N=1,103 adults

Table D22
Ten Most Important Education Issues Identified by ECS Commissioners and Policymakers

Accountability	46%
Assessment	27%
Finance	22%
Professional development	21%
Teacher education	16%
Choice	14%
Capital construction	11%
Early childhood	10%
Standards	15%
Comprehensive school reform	11%
Teacher/recruitment shortages	13%
Teacher certification/licensure	10%

Education Commission of the States, 1999, N=388 ECS commissioners and policymakers

Table D23
Support for Tying Student Improvement to Incentives for Educators, According to Employers, Parents, College Professors and Teachers

Some communities with underachieving kids are considering proposals to make educators more accountable by tying improved achievements in student's academic performance to financial incentives for teachers and principals. Generally speaking, do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?

	Proposal is a good idea
Employers	60%
Parents	53%
College professors	32%
Teachers	22%

Public Agenda, 1998, N=700 public school teachers, 708 parents, 252 employers and 257 college professors

Table D24
Agreement with Policies and Practices Affecting Teachers, Among the General Public

Now let me read you some additional statements about policies and practices that affect the teaching profession. Based on what you have heard or impressions you may have, tell me if you agree strongly with that statement, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly with each of these statements.

	Agree strongly/ agree smwht	Disagree strongly/ disagree smwht	Not sure
Teachers should be paid according to how well their students perform on tests that measure academic performance	33%	66%	1%

Louis Harris and David Haslekorn, conducted for Recruiting New Teachers, 1998, N=2,525

Table D25
Support for Merit Pay, Among Teachers

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

	1998	1989	1984
Favor	40%	31%	32%
Oppose	49%	61%	64%
Don't know	11%	8%	4%

Phi Delta Kappa Teacher's poll, 1998, N=751 public school teachers

Table D26
Most Helpful Methods to Improve Teacher Quality, According to the General Public

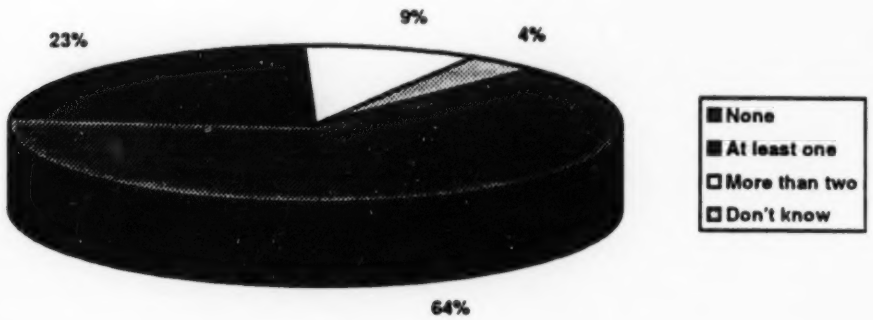
Which of the following would be most helpful in improving the quality of our teachers?

	First and second choices combined
Ongoing teacher training	51%
Require teachers to be tested	50%
Higher salaries	33%
Weed out poor teachers	30%
Salary depends on student performance	16%
Social and psychological support for teachers	11%

Global Strategy Group, Inc., conducted for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998, N=800 adults

Table D27
Teachers Fired for Poor Student Performance, According to Teachers

During the time you have been teaching at your school, how many teachers have been removed because of persistently poor performance by their students?



Public Agenda, 1998, N=700 public school teachers

IV. Conclusion

Our examination of survey research data and our own participation in research consulting on education issues assures us repeatedly that a concentration on the quality of teaching is something the public welcomes wholeheartedly. The foregoing report reveals that existing public opinion research tells us little about public perceptions of what makes a teacher good, but that the public sees teaching as a major ingredient — perhaps indeed *the* key to making public education excellent. While we know that teachers are considered among the better aspects of schools today, that does not mean the public thinks the quality of teaching is as good as it should be or that the public regards all teachers as good. In focus groups, we have heard numerous complaints from parents about individual teachers (as opposed to teachers more generally invoked in poll questions) who do not live up to high standards — either in teaching ability or command of subject matter. In schools where most teachers are seen as doing good work, there is also widespread knowledge or rumor when some teachers fail or are unpopular.

The public is anxious to hear more about improving or assuring a high degree of teacher quality in all public schools. A fuller understanding of public and educator attitudes about where and how teachers are failing and succeeding would be very informative. In the absence of more exploration, nevertheless, we feel policymakers who single out teacher quality are, in fact, addressing very real concerns about the personal and academic skills of teachers in classrooms.

Today, school districts, education advocates and policymakers are focused on accountability and the need to determine if teachers are of high quality and to identify how to urge them toward excellence. Requiring teachers to be measured against objective tests of skills and knowledge is a popular policy among the public; it makes sense in the most fundamental of ways. Also, Americans will probably support many policies that reward educators who move children forward. Americans in general and educators in particular, however, are reluctant to embrace proposals that appear to punish teachers or principals when students fail — policies the public believes hold much potential for inequity and unfairness. Policymakers will be well-advised to hold proposals for teacher accountability plans up to the light of public perception, to avoid going down paths that parents and other stakeholders may find unfair and that spur public objections.

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